

**Fiscal Years 2018 – 2020
Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan**

Planning Guide for Community Action Agencies



**Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
Division of Community Services
Community Services Unit**

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I. Background

Federal Requirements

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act, under [section 676\(b\)\(11\)](#), requires states “secure from each eligible entity in the State, as a condition to receipt of funding” a community action plan inclusive of a community-needs assessment. To fulfill this requirement, Massachusetts’s regulation [760 CMR 29.07 \(1\)](#) requires Community Action Agencies to “develop and submit a Community Action Plan to the Department for review and approval” as a condition for funding. In the past, Massachusetts CAAs’ *Community Action Plan* covered three fiscal years and included a community needs assessment as well as a strategic plan component. The three year *Community Action Plan* was also intended to feed into CAAs annual application for funding, which was known as the “*Annual WorkPlan*”. Beginning Fiscal Year 2018, to align with terminology in the CSBG Act, the Massachusetts three year “*Community Action Plan*” was renamed the “*Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan*” and the “*Annual WorkPlan*” was renamed the “*Community Action Plan*”.

In 2015 the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services released [Information Memorandum 138](#), which established Organizational Standards for CSBG eligible entities. Massachusetts chose to implement the 58 Organizational Standards developed by the Center of Excellence (COE) and supported by OCS. Under Organizational Standards, CAAs must conduct a community needs assessment and issue a report every 3 years. CAAs must also complete a strategic plan at least every 5 years. To streamline workflow, the Massachusetts CAA network advocated combining the community needs assessment/report and strategic plan into one process conducted every three years. The *Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan* is the document resulting from this process.

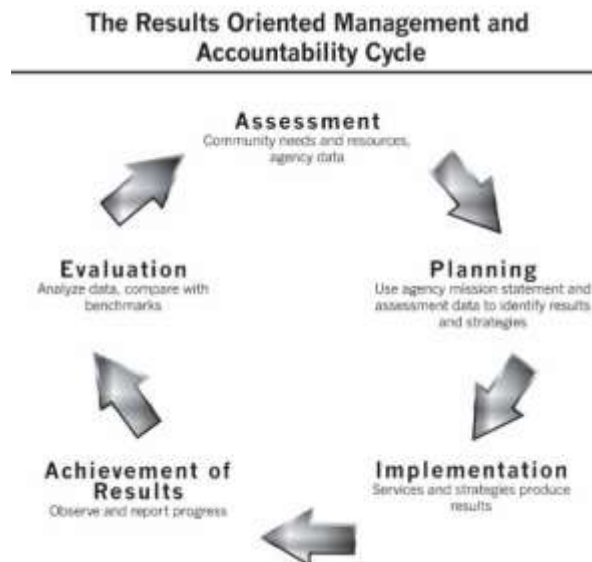
Below are Organizational Standards that relate to parts of the *Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan*. The standards are referenced throughout this planning guide where they apply:

	COE Organizational Standard # / Description
Community Assessment	1.2 The organization analyzes information collected directly from low-income individuals as part of the community assessment.
	2.2 The organization utilizes information gathered from key sectors of the community in assessing needs and resources, during the community assessment process or other times. These sectors would include at minimum: community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, private sector, public sector, and educational institutions.
	2.3 The organization communicates its activities and its results to the community.
	3.1 The organization conducted a community assessment and issued a report within the past 3 years.
	3.2 As part of the community assessment, the organization collects and includes current data specific to poverty and its prevalence related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity for their service area(s).
	3.3 The organization collects and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data on its geographic service area(s) in the community assessment.
	3.4 The community assessment includes key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty and the needs of the communities assessed.
	3.5 The governing body formally accepts the completed community assessment.
	4.2 The organization’s Community Action Plan is outcome based, anti-poverty focused, and ties directly to the community assessment.
	6.4 Customer satisfaction data and customer input, collected as part of the community assessment, is included in the strategic planning process.

Strategic Plan	4.1	The governing board has reviewed the organization's mission statements within the past 5 years and assured that: 1. The mission addresses poverty; and 2. The organization's programs and services are in alignment with the mission.
	4.3	The organization's Community Action plan and strategic plan document the continuous use of the full Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) cycle or comparable system (assessment, planning, implementation, achievement of results, and evaluation). In addition, the organization documents having used the services of a ROMA-certified trainer (or equivalent) to assist in implementation
	6.1	The organization has an agency-wide strategic plan in place that has been approved by the governing board within the past 5 years.
	6.2	The strategic plan addresses reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities, and/or empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient.
	6.3	The approved strategic plan contains family, agency and/or community goals.
	6.4	Customer satisfaction data and customer input, collected as part of the community assessment, is included in the strategic planning process.
	6.5	The governing board has received an update(s) on progress meeting the goals of the strategic plan within the past 12 months.
Update/ Review	4.4	The governing board receives an annual update on the success of specific strategies included in the Community Action plan.
	6.5	The governing board has received an update(s) on progress meeting the goals of the strategic plan within the past 12 months.
	9.3	The organization has presented to the governing board for review or action, at least within the past 12 months, an analysis of the agency's outcomes and any operational or strategic program adjustments and improvements identified as necessary.

Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA)

ROMA is an outcome based management approach in which agencies utilize data continuously to guide their decisions, as illustrated by the ROMA cycle below. The *Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan* document is critical to all parts of ROMA cycle. (*Organizational Standard 4.3*) The document shows a CAA's strategic direction over a three year period, based on the priority needs identified in a community and internal needs assessment (**Assessment & Planning**). Information in the document also feeds into a CAAs annual *Community Action Plan* (formerly known as the "*Annual Workplan*") for the next three fiscal years (**Implementation & Achievement of Results**). Finally, a CAA will refer back to the document regularly to monitor progress towards its goals (**Evaluation**).



The ROMA Cycle graphic was developed by the National Peer to Peer (NPtP) ROMA Training Project, based on guidance regarding Core Activities for States and CSBG Eligible Entities provided by OCS Information Memo 49. From Planning for Results © 2006, J. Jakopic and B. Mooney, Community Action Association of PA. Curriculum developed with funding from the US Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Community. Use is permitted with this footer. All other rights reserved.

Other Comments

It is important to note that CSBG funding, which is at the historical core of CAAs, is unlike most human service funding sources because it can be used with relative flexibility and does not represent any one service or program. Funds instead support CAAs in achieving the larger purposes and goals of the [CSBG Act](#). As a result, CAAs must consider the whole agency and all of its services in their *Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan* and subsequent Community Action Plans to ensure they are fulfilling the core purpose of their anti-poverty agency designation.

The process of developing a *Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan*, implementing strategies to meet goals, and monitoring progress towards those goals necessitates participation and buy-in from CAA staff, Boards of Directors, community leaders, customers, and low-income community members. Implementation of Organizational Standards underscores the importance of input and involvement from key stakeholders in the community assessment and strategic planning process by making it a requirement for CAAs. (*Organizational Standards 1.2, 2.2, and 6.4*) Comprehensive input and involvement from key stakeholders not only allows CAAs to better identify community needs but also helps identify strengths that can be leveraged to meet those needs. Leveraging, whether through funding or collaborating to provide services, is crucial to CAAs in an environment where human service agencies are continually asked to do more with less.

Please note that this document provides general guidance for conducting a community and internal needs assessment as well as developing a *Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan* based on the assessment. While the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) does require certain elements in the final document, CAAs are able to customize how they conduct their assessments and write their document. Where more specific guidance may be needed, the guide provides additional resources.

As a reminder, agencies must “issue” a report on their community assessment. (*Organizational Standard 3.1*) DHCD encourages CAAs to share their approved *Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan* with key stakeholders and also make it available on the agency website. Sharing the report in this way is also an opportunity for CAAs to communicate “its activities and its results to the community”. (*Organizational Standard 2.3*)

II. Timeline and Deliverable Dates

FY 2016	Calendar 2016	
	June 28 th	<u>Community Assessment & Strategic Planning Event</u>
	July	Work on Community & Internal Assessment Plan...
	August	
	September	
FY 2017	October 24 th	<u>Community & Internal Assessment Plan (including survey tools, etc.) Due</u>
	November	Conduct the Community & Internal Assessment...
	December	
	Calendar 2017	
	January	Conduct the Community & Internal Needs Assessment...
	February	
	March TBD	<u>Report on Progress conference call w/DHCD</u>
	April	Work on Report and Plan...
	May	
	June	Get Board approval of Report & Plan...
	July 10 th	<u>FY18-20 Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan Due</u> (Board Approved) <u>Top Needs Identified and Summary Plan to Meet Them Due</u> Please submit the Report & Plan and Top Needs form by July 10 th via email: To: Assigned Program Representative Cc: Tamara.Fahey@state.ma.us Ditzah.Wooden-Wade@state.ma.us Please also send a hard copy of the Report & Plan via mail to: Department of Housing & Community Development Attn: Assigned Program Representative 100 Cambridge Street, Suite 300 Boston, MA 02114
	August	<u>DHCD Approval of Report & Plan by 8/25</u>
	September	<u>Issue the Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan</u> Complete and submit FY 2018 Community Action Plan (formerly known as “the WorkPlan”, which is attached to the agency’s FY18 CSBG funding contract)...
FY 2018 - 2020	Ongoing	Monitor Implementation of the Plan... Note: Ongoing monitoring of implementation should meet the following requirements and be clearly reflected in Board meeting minutes when actions occur: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Updating the Board on success of Community Action plan (formerly known as the WorkPlan) strategies at least annually. (Organizational Standard 4.4)Updating Board on progress of meeting Strategic Plan goals at least once every 12 months. (Organizational Standard 6.5)Presenting an analysis of agency outcomes/necessary program adjustments to the Board, with Board discussion noted, at least once every 12 months. (Organizational Standard 9.3)

III. Writing the Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan

Please follow the outline below when developing your *Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan*. For guidance on what to include in each section, see pages 7-10. Where relevant, guidance makes reference to the Center of Excellence Organizational Standards associated with sections of the *Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan*.

- 1. Table of Contents**
- 2. Executive Summary**
- 3. Board Authorization**
- 4. Agency Description**
- 5. Mission Statement**
- 6. Vision Statement**
- 7. Community Profile**
- 8. Community and Internal Assessment Process**
- 9. Key Findings: Community Assessment**
- 10. Key Findings: Internal Assessment**
- 11. Strategic Three year Goals**
- 12. Specific Objectives**
- 13. Plan Monitoring and Reporting**

1. Table of Contents

List all of the *Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan* sections in the order they appear. When writing the report, be sure to provide headings for each section and number all pages.

2. Executive Summary

Provide a short (approximately 2-3 pages) summary of the *Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan* and its components.

3. Board Authorization

A page or form to indicate the agency's governing Board approved the *Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan* prior to its submission to DHCD and the date approval occurred. (*Organizational Standards 3.5 and 6.1*)

4. Agency Description

A brief (approximately 1 page) description of your agency and its history.

5. Mission Statement

A brief statement of your agency's purpose. Please also indicate when, as part of the agency's strategic planning process (or another time within the past 5 years), the mission statement was reviewed by the governing Board to assure that it addresses poverty and that the agency's programs and services are in alignment with the mission. (*Organizational Standards 4.1*)

6. Vision Statement

A description of the long-term goals of/desired change from your agency's work.

7. Community Profile

A statistical profile that describes your agency's service area and target populations. Be sure to include all of the following elements in your description:

- ✓ A listing of communities your agency serves, including designated CSBG service areas and undesignated areas.
- ✓ At minimum, current quantitative and qualitative data specific to poverty and its prevalence related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity for your entire service area, not just your designated CSBG service area. (*Organizational Standards 3.2 and 3.3*)
- ✓ Discussion of major conditions affecting the community and its members

8. Community and Internal Assessment Process*

Provide a narrative overview of the methodologies (e.g. – surveys, interviews, focus groups, secondary data, etc.) your agency used to conduct the Assessments and determine key findings. Also include the following information in your explanation:

- ✓ An explanation of how Board members and agency staff were involved in the process
- ✓ An explanation of how low-income individuals were engaged in the process. (*Organizational Standard 1.2*)
- ✓ A description the community sectors from which information was gathered including, at minimum, community and faith-based organizations, the private and public sector, and educational institutions. (*Organizational Standard 2.2*)
- ✓ An explanation of how customer satisfaction data and customer input was collected and utilized. (*Organizational Standard 6.4*)

**For more detailed guidance on these processes, see section IV. Guidance on Conducting the Community Assessment and Section V. Guidance on Conducting the Internal Needs Assessment*

9. Key Findings: Community Assessment

Summarize your findings on the existing and emerging causes and conditions of poverty as well as the needs and strengths of the communities assessed.

(*Organizational Standard 3.4*) Identify the top 3-5 individual/family and community needs found along with any community strengths that can be drawn upon to meet those needs.¹ Later on, you will also enter the top 3-5 needs identified into the *Top Needs Identified and Summary Plan to Meet Them*, a short form that connects your agency's community assessment findings to the *Community Action Plan* (formerly known as the "Annual WorkPlan"). An electronic version of the form is available on DHCD's website at: www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/community-services-block-grant-csbg.html. More information on how to complete the form is available in Section 11 and APPENDIX C of this guide.

10. Key Findings: Internal Assessment

Summarize your findings on the agency's needs and strengths (i.e. – overall financial state, ability to recruit/retain high quality staff, level of Board engagement, visibility in the community, etc.)

¹ For specific guidance on what is meant by "key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty" please refer to the: Community Action Partnership, *Technical Assistance Guide, COE Developed CSBG Organizational Standards*, [Category 3 – Community Assessment](#), 21.

11. Strategic Three Year Goals

Describe the broad goals that will “guide the agency’s programs and operations to meet the needs of low-income individuals, families, and communities”² over the next three years. (*Organizational Standard 6.3*) More specifically, the goals are your agency’s plan to address the top 3-5 individual/family and community needs (identified in section 9) and internal agency needs (identified in section 10.) These goals, which should stem from your mission, signal where the agency “will concentrate resources for results.”³ Agencies are free to structure this section however they choose but the description must address the following elements:

- ✓ **Funding Strategies** – Pursuant to the assurance under Section 676(b)(3)(C) of the [CSBG Act](#), how will coordination of CSBG funds with other public or private funding sources be used to help achieve the goals (i.e. – fundraising and/or leveraging)?
- ✓ **Service Delivery System** - Pursuant to the assurance under Section 676(b)(3)(A) of the [CSBG Act](#), how will services targeted to low-income individuals and families be provided or coordinated with CSBG funds?
- ✓ **Linkages** - Pursuant to assurances under Sections 676(b)(5) and (b)(6) of the [CSBG Act](#), how will the agency link or coordinate with governmental and other social services, especially antipoverty programs, to assure effective delivery and avoid duplication of CSBG services to low-income people and communities? In other words, how will the agency build upon existing services, resources, and/or strengths in the community to meet each need?
- ✓ **Service Gaps** - Pursuant to the assurance under Section 676(b)(3)(B) of the [CSBG Act](#), how will the agency use linkages to fill identified gaps in services through the provision of information, referrals, case management, and follow-up consultations? In other words, if an identified community need exceeds your agency’s capacity to meet it and/or there are others already working to meet it in the community, have you answered questions such as: Can our agency bring more attention to this need in the community? Can our agency leverage resources to meet this need? Can our agency fill a service gap by coordinating with others to address this need?

In order to link key information from your agency’s 2018-2020 Strategic Plan to your FY 2018-2020 *Community Action Plans* (formerly known as the “*WorkPlan*”) and to ensure compliance with certain *Organizational Standards*, you will need to complete

² Community Action Partnership, *Technical Assistance Guide, COE Developed CSBG Organizational Standards*, [Category 6 - Strategic Planning](#), 1.

³ Drucker, Peter et al, *The Five Most Important Questions You Will Ever Ask About Your Organization* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 66.

the electronic *Top Needs Identified and Summary Plan to Meet Them* form available at: www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/community-services-block-grant-csbg.html. An example need/plan is also available in APPENDIX C of this guide. To complete the form, follow the instructions below for each of the top 3-5 community needs:

- ✓ Enter a “Strategic Three Year Goal Statement” into the chart
- ✓ Indicate whether the goal addresses “reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities, and/or empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient.”⁴ (*Organizational Standard 6.2*)
- ✓ Indicate whether the goal is an agency, community or family goal. (*Organizational Standards 6.3*)
- ✓ Indicate which CSBG Service Category⁵ applies to each goal. **Note:** *goals will feed into your agency’s Community Action Plan (formerly known as the “Annual WorkPlan”) by way of the service category selected. (Organizational Standard 4.2) If a goal could apply to multiple service categories, select the one that best describes the primary purpose of/services planned for achieving that goal.*

12. Specific Objectives

Describe the specific steps your agency will take in Year One, Year Two, and Year Three to achieve your overarching “Strategic Three Year Goals”. Include a description of any linkages (e.g., through information and referral services, case management, follow-up consultation, advocacy for and in conjunction with other local service providers, regionalization, etc.) or funding strategies your agency will employ to achieve your goals. Also enter these Specific Objectives into your agency’s *Top Needs Identified and Summary Plan to Meet Them* form. (*Organizational Standard 6.3*)

13. Plan Monitoring and Reporting

Briefly explain how the agency and its Board will monitor and evaluate implementation of this plan. Be sure to identify key dates and persons responsible. As a reminder, the “Specific Objectives” listed for each “Strategic Three Year Goal” will feed into your agency’s *Community Action Plan* (formerly known as the “*Annual WorkPlan*”) which the Board must receive an update on *at least* annually. (*Organizational Standard 4.4*)

⁴ For specific guidance on what is meant by “*approved strategic plan addresses reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities, and/or empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient*” refer to: Community Action Partnership, *Technical Assistance Guide, COE Developed CSBG Organizational Standards, Category 6 - Strategic Planning*, 9-13.

⁵ For more guidance on what services fall under the ten categories, see: National Association for State Community Service Programs, *CSBG Lexicon*, October 2015.

IV. Guidance on Conducting the Community Assessment

The community assessment process happens in four general phases: 1.) Assessment Planning 2.) Data Gathering 3.) Data Analysis and 4.) Report Writing. Prior to gathering any data, DHCD asks CAAs to submit a *Community & Internal Assessment Plan* form outlining key participants, tools, and timelines for your agency's assessment process no later than **October 24th, 2016**. A sample of the form is available in *APPENDIX A* of this guide and an electronic version is available on DHCD's website at: www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/community-services-block-grant-csbg.html. Once your agency's assessment process is underway, DHCD will also request a *Report on Progress* approximately four months before the *Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan* is due. What follows is general guidance and considerations when conducting a community assessment. For more detailed guidance on conducting a community needs assessment, refer to the "Community Action Partnership (CAP) and National Association for State Community Service Programs (NASCSP) Resources" found in *APPENDIX B: Assessment Resources*.

1. Assessment Planning

- **Initiating the planning Process:** To initiate planning process, NASCSP's recommends agency Board and management staff meet to discuss the scope of the community assessment.⁶ Some things to consider as part of this meeting are:
 - Did the last assessment give enough information to inform your last strategic plan?
 - Is there anything you want to do differently from your last assessment?
 - Gain Board agreement on the scope, content, and cost of community assessment
 - Gain buy in from key stakeholders on the process and its goals
 - Opportunities to collaborate with community partners
 - Determine if you will target specific communities in the assessment
 - How will you group/categorize the assessment information/issues?
- **Form a planning committee:** The next step in the planning phase is to form a planning committee. Generally, the committee's role is to outline the assessment process including developing the timeline, identifying who is responsible for creating and implementing assessment tools, determining how progress gets reported to the Board, etc. The planning committee should include

⁶ National Association for State Community Services Programs. "A Community Action Guide to Comprehensive Community Needs Assessments." Last modified July 2011.
http://www.nascsp.org/data/files/CSBG_Resources/Train_Tech_Assistance/Needs_Assessment_FINAL_-_8.22_print_to_pdf.pdf

board members, staff, customers, volunteers, partners from other organizations/key stakeholders, etc.

- **Select the data sources:** While the Board and management team decides how to group/categorize assessment information, the planning committee determines what data is needed and how to get it. Below are some questions the committee should consider. Please also include this information on “Chart 2: Data Sources” of the *Community & Internal Assessment Plan* form⁷:
 - What quantitative data sources will you use? Some suggested data sources are available in *APPENDIX B: Assessment Resources* at the end of this guide.
 - What tools/methods will you use to collect qualitative data (e.g. – surveys, focus groups, community forums, etc.) See the next section for more information.
 - What partner organizations, volunteers, and key stakeholders will you involve in the process?
- **Determine the timeline:** Once the committee is formed and you know what data sources you will collect, you can determine the timeline for your assessment activities. For each planned assessment activity, enter the key point(s) of contact and timeline in “Chart 1: Schedule of Activities” of the *Community & Internal Assessment Plan* form.
- **Present the plan to the Board:** Prior to submitting your *Community & Internal Assessment Plan* to DHCD, it should be reviewed and endorsed by the Board.

2. Data Gathering

Things to keep in mind when collecting data:

- **Quantitative Data** – Suggested quantitative data sources are available in *APPENDIX B*.
- **Qualitative Data Methods** - Resources on qualitative data collection methods are available in the CAP Category 3 Technical Assistance Guide.⁸ Useful information on conducting forums, focus groups, interviews, and surveys is also available in “Chapter 2. Assessing Community Needs and Resources” of the [Community Tool Box](#).⁹

⁷ A sample *Community & Internal Assessment Plan* form is available in *APPENDIX A* of this guide and an electronic version is available at: www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/community-services-block-grant-csbg.html.

⁸ Community Action Partnership, *Technical Assistance Guide*, COE Developed CSBG Organizational Standards, [Category 3 – Community Assessment](#), 17-20.

⁹ Community Tool Box, <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources>.

- ***Input from low-income residents and customers*** - Organizational Standards direct CAAs to collect input from low-income residents and consumers of agency services during the community assessment. (*Organizational Standard 1.2 and 6.4*) The intent of these standards is to ensure maximum feasible participation by giving low-income residents a strong voice in the community assessment process. To give an accurate description of community needs, agencies should also actively seek out input from low-income residents who are not current clients in their programs.

3. Data Analysis

- ***Organizing the Findings*** – Begin to sort the data under the “framework” (ex. – CSBG service categories, ROMA Goals, other issues categories) that the Board and management team determined early on in the planning process.
- ***Qualitative and quantitative data should be complimentary*** – When analyzing data collected, look for opportunities to strengthen your discussion of community needs and strengths by using quantitative data to support information collected through surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc. Conversely, look to use qualitative data to give community statistics a human face.¹⁰
- ***Analyzing Input from low-income residents*** - Organizational Standards direct CAAs to ensure input from low-income individuals is collected and analyzed. (*Organizational Standard 1.2*) Again, the intent of this standards is to ensure maximum feasible participation by giving low-income residents a strong voice in the community assessment process. Agencies should not only ensure they analyze information from low-income individuals but document when and how this occurred as part of the community assessment to ensure compliance with this standard.
- ***Top 3-5 Community Needs*** – Once you’ve analyzed the data and sorted it under your framework of issues, determine which 3-5 needs are the top priorities in the community.

4. Report Writing

- See “Section III. Writing the Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan” for guidance; sections 7-9 specifically pertain to the Community Assessment “report”.

¹⁰ For additional guidance on using complimentary quantitative and qualitative data, please refer to the: Community Action Partnership, *Technical Assistance Guide, COE Developed CSBG Organizational Standards*, [Category 3 – Community Assessment](#), 17-20.

V. Guidance on Conducting the Internal Needs Assessment

The internal assessment process helps agencies identify gaps and strengths in their programs and operations that impact their ability to meet the needs of low-income individuals and families. All levels of an agency (staff to Board) should be engaged in the internal assessment process in order to give a complete view of the agency. Though agencies have flexibility in how they conduct their internal assessment, its key findings must be factored in to the agency's strategic three year goals to address top community needs. As part of the internal assessment process, agencies should consider questions such as:

- What is our agency's overall financial health?
- How visible are we/what are we known for in the community?
- Do all our programs address priority needs? If not, why do we continue them?
- Are all of our programs running well/achieving results?
- What is our succession plan for key staff/roles? Is it strong?
- Do we recruit/retain high quality staff? If not, why?
- How engaged is our Board in the development, planning, implementation and evaluation of the agency's programs and activities?
- Are our staff and Board adequately trained?
- What are the greatest challenges our agency faces?

In their *Technical Assistance Guide*, Community Action Partnership cautions CAAs to ensure the anti-poverty mission of our network is at the forefront when developing their strategic plan, including when utilizing information from an internal assessment:

*"Some agencies contract out the development of the strategic planning process to consultants who are not fully aware of the need to directly connect strategic plans goals to those of the CSBG Act. In other cases, agencies focus their strategic plans on management and operational goals internal to the organization (e.g. information technology, facilities, fundraising), often assuming that goals for the customers and communities they serve are addressed in the Community Action Plan. Such a situation risks creating a fragmented and piecemeal approach to the design and implementation of programs and service delivery strategies by not connecting them to an overarching strategic framework that guides the long-term work of the agency. Standard 6.3 also affirms the importance of such an approach by requiring CAAs to include family, agency, and/or community goals in their strategic plans."*¹¹

In other words, the agency's internal needs assessment should complement its community needs assessment and findings from both should help the agency form its plan for meeting the needs of low-income individuals and families.

¹¹ Community Action Partnership, *Technical Assistance Guide*, COE Developed CSBG Organizational Standards, [Category 6 - Strategic Planning](#), 9.

Just as the community assessment requires multiple methods to gain a complete understanding of need, the internal assessment should also involve a comprehensive approach. Below are some examples of activities the agency might consider conducting as part of their internal assessment:

- Agency retreats
- Use of consultant/facilitator
- Reviews of program data
- Surveys, interviews, focus groups
- Reviews of customer satisfaction data (*Organizational Standard 6.4* requires this)
- Self-assessments
- Best Practice Analysis

Please include key participants, tools, and timelines for your agency's internal assessment process on "Chart 1: Schedule of Activities" of the *Community & Internal Assessment Plan* form.¹² DHCD will also request an update on the internal assessment process as part of the *Report on Progress* approximately four months before the *Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan* is due.

¹² A sample *Community & Internal Assessment Plan* form is available in APPENDIX A of this guide and an electronic version is available at: www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/community-services-block-grant-csbg.html.

VI. References

- Community Action Partnership. "Technical Assistance Guide, COE Developed CSBG Organizational Standards, Category 3 Community Assessment." Last modified November 2, 2015.
http://www.communityactionpartnership.com/storage/cap/documents/OSCOE/Toolkits/final_draft_community_assessment.pdf.
- Community Action Partnership. "Technical Assistance Guide, COE Developed CSBG Organizational Standards, Category 6 Strategic Planning." Last modified December 2015.
http://www.communityactionpartnership.com/storage/cap/documents/OSCOE/Toolkits/final_category_6_revised_12_2015.pdf.
- Community Tool Box. "Chapter 3. Assessing Community Needs and Resources." Last modified 2015.
<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources>.
- Drucker, Peter et al, *The Five Most Important Questions You Will Ever Ask About Your Organization*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.
- National Association for State Community Services Programs. "A Community Action Guide to Comprehensive Community Needs Assessments." Last modified July 2011.
http://www.nascsp.org/data/files/CSBG_Resources/Train_Tech_Assistance/Needs_Assessment_FINAL_-_8.22_print_to_pdf.pdf.
- National Association for State Community Service Programs. "CSBG Lexicon for Community Services Block Grant Funded Programs." Last modified October 2015.
http://www.nascsp.org/data/files/csbgi_survey/csbgi_lexicon_nascsp_2015.pdf.

APPENDIX A: Community & Internal Assessment Plan

Chart 1: Schedule of Activities <i>(add more rows below if needed)</i>		
Activity	Lead/Point of Contact Name and Who/What they Represent <i>(e.g. – Board, staff, volunteer, partner agency, outside consultants, etc.)</i>	Timeline

Chart 2: Data Sources <i>(add more rows below if needed)</i>	
Quantitative Data Source <i>(e.g. - Census, client database, etc.)</i>	Quantitative Data Source <i>(e.g. - Census, client database, etc.)</i>
Qualitative Data Source* <i>(e.g. - Surveys, focus Groups, interviews)</i>	Partner Organization/Stakeholder Engaged <i>(if Applicable)</i>

*Submit copies of any instruments to be used for surveys, interviews and/or focus groups to your assigned Program Representative along with this Internal & Community Assessment Plan document no later than October 24th 2016.

APPENDIX B: Assessment Resources

Community Action Partnership (CAP) and National Association for State Community Service Programs (NASCS) Resources		
Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment (CCNA) Tool and Mapping Hub	http://www.communitycommons.org/groups/community-action-partnership/ Webinars on using the tool: http://www.communitycommons.org/how-to-use-the-ccna-report-tool/	Data/mapping tool for community action agencies; starting point for community assessment data.
A Community Action Guide to Comprehensive Community Needs Assessments	www.nascsp.org/data/files/CSBG_Resources/Train_Tech_Assistance/Needs_Assessment_FINAL_-_8.22_print_to_pdf.pdf	
CSBG Training and Technical Assistance Resource Center	https://www.csbgta.org/ Resource Bank: https://www.csbgta.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=2	
Federal Agency Resources		
US Census Bureau	www.census.gov American FactFinder: http://factfinder.census.gov 2010 Census: www.census.gov/2010census American Community Survey (ACS) www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) www.census.gov/did/www/saipe Economic Census: www.census.gov/econ/census American Housing Survey (AHS): www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs	
Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics	www.bls.gov/data	
Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	https://www.huduser.gov/portal/research/home.html	
Department of Agriculture (USDA)	www.ers.usda.gov/data Food Security: www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us	
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)	https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems.html	
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)	www.samhsa.gov/samhsa-data-outcomes-quality/major-data-collections	

Massachusetts Departments		
Office of Health and Human Services	www.mass.gov/eohhs/researcher	Information on: Basic Needs, Health, Family Services, Insurance, etc.
Office of Education	www.mass.gov/edu/researchers	Information on: Early, Elementary, Secondary and Higher Education
Office of Elder Affairs	www.mass.gov/elders/regs-stats	Elder population information
Office of Labor and Workforce Development	www.mass.gov/lwd/economic-data	Labor market information
Center for Health Information and Analysis	www.chiamass.gov	Health insurance information
State Library of Massachusetts	www.mass.gov/anf/research-and-tech/gov-data-and-docs/state-documents-and-resources.html	State Documents and Resources
Other		
Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center	www.massbudget.org	Data on Education, Health Care, Jobs/Economy, Kids, Minimum Wage, and Taxes.
Annie E. Casey Foundation	www.aecf.org/ Kid's Count: http://www.aecf.org/work/kids-count	Data on children and families
National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)	www.nlihc.org Out of Reach 2016: http://nlihc.org/oor	Data on Affordable Housing
Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED)	http://cfed.org	Data and mapping tools on various economic opportunity topics
Opportunity Index	http://opportunitynation.org/opportunity-index	Measurement of various economic, academic, and civic factors that impact opportunity.

APPENDIX C: Top Needs Identified and Summary Plan to Meet Them

Agency Name: *Example Community Action Agency*

Need #1: <i>Example: Affordable healthcare</i>	
Strategic Three Year Goal Statement	
<i>Our agency will increase access to affordable health care in our communities served.</i>	
Indicate whether the goal addresses (check all that apply): <input type="checkbox"/> Reduction of Poverty <input type="checkbox"/> Revitalization of low-income communities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self sufficient	<i>Org. Standard 6.2</i>
Indicate whether it is a (check all that apply): <input type="checkbox"/> Family Goal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Goal <input type="checkbox"/> Agency Goal	<i>Org. Standard 6.3</i>
Indicate which CSBG Service Category applies (check one): <input type="checkbox"/> Employment <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Income Management <input type="checkbox"/> Housing <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Services <input type="checkbox"/> Nutrition <input type="checkbox"/> Linkages <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Sufficiency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Health <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<i>Org. Standard 4.2</i>
Specific Objectives <small>insert additional rows if needed</small>	
<u>Fiscal Year 2018</u>	
<i>Become a Health Care Navigator agency</i>	
<i>Increase our number of linkages with health care centers in our communities served by 50%</i>	
<i>Raise \$20,000 to fund a Health Care Navigator case management position</i>	
<u>Fiscal Year 2019</u>	
<i>Establish formal Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with health care centers</i>	
<i>Fill Health Care Navigator case management position</i>	
<u>Fiscal Year 2020</u>	
<i>Provide enrollment assistance to community members</i>	

Note: the electronic version of Appendix C is available on:
www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/community-services-block-grant-csbg.html